

Andrew Jackson to Samuel Lewis Southard, March 6, 1827, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO SECRETARY SOUTHARD.1

1 Copy. In the Jackson MSS. are letters dated Mar. 22, 1827, from John S. Wellford, John H. Wallace, Fayette Johnston, Colonel William F. Gray, Archibald Hart, William F. Blackford, and John Minor, all relating to what Southard had said at the dinner at Wellford's; and all written to show that Southard did not asperse the conduct of Jackson.

Hermitage, March 6, 1827.

Sir. I have recd your letter of the 9th ult, in answer to mine of the 5th of January under cover of your subsequent letter of the 16th of February.

On the receipt of the written statement of Dr. Wallace, affirmed to be substantially true by Mr. Johnston who was present, I addressed you, and from the high and dignified station which you then, and still hold, I had a right to expect a frank and candid answer giving the source thro which you derived information so positively expressed, and where the order Issued by Mr Monroe, that brought me to Neworleans was to be found. This from one of the heads of the Department of our gover[n]ment was not too much to look for. I had not asked for your historical knowledge, or for your opinion of Doctor Wallace, or of Mr Johnston *who is not a neighbour of Mr Willford* as advised, or any other gentlemen who were present, believing that all must have been gentlemen and men of truth who were associated with you at the party. I asked you for a frank answer, not an argumentative one which to my mind always carries with it the want of sincerity. As you are at the head of that chivalric corps, the Navy, to whose exploits the glory of our country is so much indebted,

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I believed that you would have answered Just as one of those high minded honorable men would on such an occasion, but I have been disappointed. You deny any intention, however, to injure me, whilst you profess to have no distinct recollection of the language used. Whether the *unofficial "aspect" of the time and place* shall excuse your memory, or weaken the statement of the Doctor, it is not my business to determine; I cannot suppose that you meant to intimate that the stamp official or unofficial can affect the obligation of honorable men on all occasions to speak truly and act Justly, whether at wine drinkings or at the bureaus of state. It is a matter of much regret to me that the variance between your statement and that of the gentlemen named, does not enable me to act understandingly on the subject; it was to avoid this situation, that I requested Genl. Houston to receive your statement, and thus save me the trouble of sending a copy to those gentlemen, which Justice now requires should be done. I feel sorry therefore that you could not deliver your communication unsealed to Genl. Houston.

As my inquiry was dictated by the persuasion that my character was injured by the statement presented thro Dr. Wallace; and its *only* object to expose those who wilfully misrepresented it, especially should they be high in authority like yourself, I shall add a few remarks upon your historical knowledge, and your reply to the question you acknowledge to have been asked by Colo. Gray, and your answer. Had your recollection not proved very bad as it relates to the history of the times and to myself "*verbal, written and printed*" , you would have known that I solicited the Govt, as early as June 1814, when I forwarded to it information of the assemblage of a British force at Pensacola, for permission to drive them from that rendezvous before their reinforcements could arrive, and to disperse the Indians whom they had organised there; and altho, the order requested was Issued in July 1814, it never reached me till after the declaration of peace. From your "*verbal written and printed*" information, you might also have ascertained, that I kept the Govt. advised of the preparations of the British in Pensacola to attack Ft. Boyer, and thro that point to invade the country, and that I again intreated the Govt for orders to attack them—no answer from the Govt—that after the British did actually attack Fort Boyer and invade the country,

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and were repulsed I again made the same entreaty of my Govt., but it was still silent. I then informed it of the meditated attack by great Britain with all its combined force as early as the 27th of august, when I appealed to the patriotism of my old Volunteers under the command of that brave Officer Genl Coffee (having ordered before, all the Troops authorised by the Govt.) and with this force called for on my own responsibility marched to, and expelled the British from Pensacola; by which movement I frustrated the original plan of invasion thro mobile, and by thus clearing my left flank of the Enemy, was enabled to move to Neworleans, ordering on Genl Coffee's command to Baton Rouge; These were the men called armed and equipped, at my own responsibility, that enabled me to save neworleans.

Tho my friendship has been as sincere for Mr Monroe as yours or any other mans can be, I will ask in what history "verbal written or printed" have you learned that he had any agency in all this, except writing to me on the 21. Octr not to march on Pensacola, that the Govt was about to negotiate with Spain etc. etc., and I would ask you as a military man whether negotiation then with Spain would have prevented invasion on the part of great Britain had I not driven her force from Pensacola and destroyed her Indian allies. But these facts were forgotten in your *unofficial* zeal, and in your *winedrinking*. I cannot but marvel what connection there is between Mr Monroe and the Presidential canvass in your mind, that at this period you should seek to adorn him with plumage which I know he could not consent to wear. To proceed however with the historical facts "*verbal, written, and printed*", So soon as I had cleared my left flank of the enemy, having ordered Genl. Coffee across to Baton Rouge, *without the means provided*, "*the information given or the orders sent*", of the Govt. I repaired to orleans reaching that place on the first day of Decbr. 1814. Now I hazard the assertion, without the fear of contradiction, that you have never seen, read, or been verbally informed by Mr Monroe, or any other person of truth, that ever Mr Monroe wrote, or sent me an order prior to the date of my arrival at New-orleans; and that from the 20th of Novbr 1814 untill the 18th of February 1815 I ever recd a single line from the Department of War; and as you are so conversant with history "*verbal,*

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written, and printed”, I regret in your zeal for truth that you did not read mine in answer to the letter of the 10th of Decbr 1814 that moment recd. But further, on my arrival at orleans, I found the arsnal empty of all the materials for vigorous and ample defence against such an overwhelming invading enemy, well armed, and supplied for attack—no arms, and what was still worse, no flints for the few arms to put into the hands of the militia. What was to be done? Requisitions had been made in Septbr 1814 and acknowledged, and the agent at Pittsburgh had promised to have them forwarded, Still the Steam Boat arrived from Pittsburgh with no arms, no fixed ammunition, no flints, no ordinance, or ordinance stores and the report was that those supplies altho offered to be brought by the Steam boat at 75 cents pr. cwt was entrusted to a pedling merchant at 50 cents pr Cwt, with the permission to sell, or barter, his goods on the way, all which, as you have read much, you might have seen on record in the war office where the trial of Mr Maples before a court martial ought to be found. Thus situated, I was advised that the Barritarians had flints and some arms, and were willing to surrender themselves and all their supplies on condition of promise of pardon on good conduct. I directed Mr. Livingston my voluntary aid to accept them, and give the Pledge. This was done and I obtained 7500 pistol flints, which were put into the arms obtained for the militia and contributed much to the defence of the city. Now I will again ask what agency had Mr Monroe in all this that it should be said his energetic orders raised the *means* for the *defence* of Neworleans. These means were procu[r]ed by myself and my agents, and enabled me to make the defence I did. I would be the last man in the Union to Strip Mr Monroe of the credit to which he is entitled, and have no doubt he Issued orders for the requisitions and for the supply of arms, but in a military point of view it is not only necessary for the Superior to order but to see his orders executed. Besides, the Govt. did know and was informed in the latter end of Septbr. or first of Octr. 1814 that the Tennesseans and Kentuckians would march, but could not be armed—in consequence the 5000 stand was sent to Pittsburgh and might have been brought to me in due time in the Steam boat; but for the pittance of 25 cents pr Cwt. were detained, and our country thereby Jeopardised, and would probably have been lost, had it not have been for the providential supply obtained from the Barritarians.

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I have therefore to *request* when on your electioneering tours, or at your wine drinkings hereafter, you will not fail to recollect these historical facts which indeed you ought long since to have known from the *verbosities writings* and *printings* of the times, and that you will not forget to state that I never abandoned the eagles of my country in the day of trial and danger; nor ever failed to take upon myself the responsibility of driving from our shores, or from those of a faithless neutral, our declared enemy when I found it necessary for the safety of my country; and altho I admire the zeal you display for your friend, yet it ought to be recollected that an honorable man will never do injustice to another in that zeal. I am sure Mr Monroe from his love of truth (or I am much mistaken in him) would be the last man to say that he had given or written me an order to repair to Orleans of prior date to the time I reached that place. I always kept him advised of my situations, intentions, and movements, and mine of the 14th of Novbr. 1814 from Pierces Block house and 20th of Novbr. from mobile,¹ as is believed, must have reached him before the 10th of Decbr was written, from the then expedition of the mail—mine being sent by Express to the direct line of mail, which at that time travelled at the rate of 100 miles in 24 hours, and the distance to the City 1200 miles.

¹ See vol. II., pp. 96, 101.

Having given you a few of the “*written, printed and verbal*” facts of the time alluded to, I close this correspondence, and am yr mo. obdt. Servt.